

## MAIDENHEAD TOWN FORUM

TUESDAY, 18 MAY 2021

PRESENT: Councillors David Coppinger (Chairman), Helen Taylor (Vice-Chairman), Gurpreet Bhangra, Ross McWilliams, Clive Baskerville, Chris Targowski, John Baldwin, Jon Davey, Greg Jones, Gerry Clark and Gurch Singh

Also in attendance: Councillors Samantha Rayner, Donna Stimson and David Cannon

Officers: Andrew Durrant, Simon Dale, Neil Walter, Andy Carswell and Mark Beeley

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Hill, with Councillor Davey attending the meeting as substitute. Councillor Targowski had informed the clerk that he would join the meeting at around 7pm.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 were approved, providing the following amendment was made:**

- Councillor Baskerville said that the spelling of the 'Nicholsons Shopping Centre' was incorrect.

### DISTRICT ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: The Chairman informed the Forum that he would be switching the order of the agenda, so the District Enforcement update would be considered first.**

The Chairman said that there had been some confusion around this item and what it would involve. Therefore, Simon Dale would respond to a number of questions that had been submitted in advance of the meeting but the Chairman had decided not to allow any further questions from members of the Forum.

Simon Dale, Interim Head of Highways, explained that due to a miscommunication he had only been informed of the item being on the agenda at short notice. The contract had received a significant amount of scrutiny already and had previously been considered by the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel. A number of questions had been submitted in advance by a resident, Mr John Webb. Simon Dale was happy to answer these through a Freedom of Information request but in the interests of transparency and openness, Simon Dale explained that he would provide the answers to these questions in the meeting. The answers were provided for the period October 2020 to March 2021, which was the six-month pilot of the district enforcement contract. The figures below all related to district enforcement work in and around Maidenhead:

- The number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued was 939.
- The reasons for fines being issued included general littering, fly tipping, duty of care and excess black bags being left out.

- Number of fines for cigarette butt littering was 768
- Number of fines issued for fly tipping was 16, with 7 domestic incidents and 9 business incidents recorded.
- Number of fines issued on private property was 48.
- Number of challenges to fines was 388, with 126 being overturned. These were borough wide figures.
- Number of fines that were currently going through court was 105.
- The age profile of litterers was:
  - 18 years old – 3
  - 19 years old – 11
  - 20-29 years old – 176
  - 30-39 years old – 209
  - 40-49 years old – 204
  - 50-59 years old – 172
  - 60-69 years old – 88
  - 70-79 years old – 24
  - Age not known – 52
- The socio-economic profile of litterers was not something that was recorded.
- The percentage reduction in littering across the borough could not be measured but Simson Dale believed on the whole it was a very clean borough.
- The premise of district enforcement was to change people's behaviour, with fines being offered as part of the service.
- No warnings had been issued to litterers.
- Around 900 'stubby pouches' had been handed out.
- 708 fines had been paid to district enforcement.

The Chairman stated that he would not be accepting any further questions from those present.

Councillor Baldwin raised a point of order and believed that the Chairman was not allowed to stop Forum members from asking questions on an item that had been presented on the agenda. Councillor Baldwin expressed his disappointment in not being able to ask questions.

The Chairman explained that the responses given were to a series of questions. He felt it was better for the questions to be answered and this was not a presentation on district enforcement. There had been some confusion on the item and Simon Dale was not in a position to answer questions.

Simon Dale said that the contract had been to scrutiny before and that was the appropriate environment to answer questions on the contract. A presentation had not been prepared due to the short notice.

Councillor Baldwin said that he had a number of questions on the figures and answers that had just been provided at the meeting and he asked the Chairman why he was not going to let Forum members ask any questions.

The Chairman said that there had been confusion before the meeting and it was therefore best for Simon Dale to only answer the questions that had been submitted by Mr John Webb. The Chairman said that he would be happy to have district enforcement on the agenda for a future meeting.

Simon Dale said that if questions were presented through the usual channels, then the team would be more than happy to answer. The premise of district enforcement was to try and change people's behaviour.

Councillor Singh asked for a written version of the verbal report that Simon Dale had presented at the meeting. He expressed his disappointment at not being able to ask questions, he had come to the meeting with a number of questions that he wanted to ask.

Councillor Singh said that he wanted to have a fair and open conversation between officers, district enforcement, Members and residents at the Forum. Councillor Singh asked the Chairman if he would allow a 20 minute discussion on the item to help resolve any issues Members and residents had.

Simon Dale said that to resolve the situation, he would be prepared to try and answer some of the questions that the Forum had. He said that the Forum felt like an 'ambush'.

The Chairman said that he would be happy to allow 15 minutes of discussion on the item.

Councillor Davey said that a resident had let him know that district enforcement were issuing fines near a school gate in Windsor. He did not believe that parents should be subject to district enforcement officers when they were picking up their children from school.

Councillor Baldwin believed that district enforcement had answered many of the questions before and in his opinion should therefore be able to answer questions that the Forum might have had. Councillor Baldwin asked what connection there was between district enforcement and the Kingdom Service Group, WISE, and whether any of these companies had competed against each other in any contract for any local authority, anywhere in the UK.

Simon Dale said that he was attending the Forum in good faith. He could not answer the question that Councillor Baldwin had asked and asked how Councillor Baldwin expected him to know the answer. Simon Dale did not feel the line of questioning was appropriate for the Town Forum.

Councillor Targowski asked what district enforcement did in Maidenhead. He felt there was a lot of litter and fines needed to be an appropriate level in order to discourage littering.

Dilber Thind, District Enforcement, answered Councillor Davey's earlier question. He explained that the team had received complaints of litter outside the school in question with officers patrolling the area. A number of cigarette butts were being dropped and it was an area that was being focused on. Officers followed a risk assessment and would not stop people in a dangerous situation.

Councillor Clark commented on Councillor Baldwin's question and believed it was not appropriate.

Councillor Baldwin said that the question was of interest to Members, residents and was relevant to the value for money and quality of service that residents wanted. Councillor Baldwin believed that the questions that had been asked at the meeting were predictable.

Councillor Taylor suggested that this should be put on the agenda for the next meeting of the Forum in July 2021.

Councillor Singh asked if district enforcement had been in contact with schools across the borough to educate pupils about littering.

Simon Dale said that they were happy go through the contract as part of the Overview and Scrutiny process. He suggested that the questions asked could be captured as part of that process.

John Webb thanked Simon Dale for providing the answers to the questions that he had submitted. Mr Webb believed that most of the fines for littering had been for cigarette butts and said that there was still a lot of litter around the borough.

## MAIDENHEAD WATERWAYS

Richard Davenport, Chair of Friends of Maidenhead Waterways, gave the Forum a presentation on the waterways project. Maidenhead was a town that had the River Thames flowing through it but this was far from the centre. The abandoned York Stream ran through the centre of the town but was largely derelict and in a poor state. The 2011 Area Action Plan allocated six opportunity areas for redevelopment, which included sites adjourning the York Stream at Chapel Arches, York Road and Stafferton Way. The goal of the project was to restore the waterway to a navigable standard, integrating the waterway with ongoing regeneration to create a high quality, safe, green corridor through the town centre. The development of the Borough Local Plan provided additional opportunities to link the waterway with much of the regeneration and redevelopment which was planned for Maidenhead town centre.

There had been a number of challenges to the waterway project:

- It was a bold, complex and unique project.
- The waterway had been designed to avoid adding to the flood risk.
- It was important to balance the needs of ecology and amenity.
- There was a long-term strategy which depended on funding in stages.
- Contractor disputes and delay penalties had added to the cost.

Richard Davenport explained that the waterway, Chapel Arches and the weir were together Maidenhead's largest and most visible regeneration/transformation project to date. Richard Davenport showed the Forum a number of pictures of the waterways at various locations and at different times in the development and construction process. The waterways had brought resurgent wildlife back to the town centre, with the deeper stable water allowing new habitats. Fish and eel passes had been built into the new weir and there was fish passage through Maidenhead town centre for the first time. A number of birds and other species were now present on the waterways.

There was still some outstanding work to be completed on the York Stream arm of the waterway:

- The flood wall under the A4 needed to be fixed to prevent path flooding.
- Boat launch facilities needed to be added to activate the waterway and enable maintenance of the town centre channels.
- A maintenance programme of inspections and routine works was to be established.
- Removal of a low pipe bridge underneath the railway bridge.
- Finishing touches: more trees, signage and info boards.

The next steps for the waterway, which were subject to funding:

- Complete residual works on the York Stream.
- Clear a passage along Bray Cut for small boats, linking with the Thames.
- Develop the Ivy Leaf club waterside site once it was available.
- Restore the Moor Cut arm to join with the York Stream to complete the town centre 'ring'.
- A step by step joined up long term strategy was essential to avoid significant cost.

Councillor Baskerville commented that it had been an impressive project. He had noted that the Chapel Arches bridge was 200 years old in 2025 and asked if the waterway would be completed by then. Councillor Baskerville asked if there would be enough room for boats to use the waterway.

Richard Davenport said that it was feasible the project would be completed by 2025 but this was dependent on funding. Small boats were already able to use the York Stream arm of the waterway but there were a few 'pinch points' preventing passage by larger boats.

Councillor Baskerville asked if the waterway would attract fishermen.

Richard Davenport confirmed that it could and already was doing so. The waterway was officially a side channel of the River Thames and therefore the same rules applied.

Councillor G Jones said that the waterway was a great asset for the town. He asked if provision had been made for boats to be moored up.

Richard Davenport said that planning permission had been gained for an access ramp and pontoons at Chapel Arches which would allow access to and from the water. Things like a boat hire could potentially be explored in future.

Councillor G Jones further asked about the Green Lane weir and whether there were weir gates or would all boats have to use the rollers.

Richard Davenport explained that in the planning permission there was provision for a lock on that section, but the lock would not be added until such time as boats large enough to need one could reach the area. In the interim, the rollers would be able to take a boat of a certain size.

Councillor Bhangra thanked Richard Davenport for the presentation and said the work on the waterways had been done well.

Councillor Stimson said that work on the ramp and pontoon project was moving forward, the waterway was a fantastic piece of infrastructure that was important for Maidenhead and for wellbeing.

### ITEM SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

The Chairman suggested having an item on the traffic and roadworks that were currently ongoing in Maidenhead.

Councillor Taylor said that she was part of a Covid Recovery Panel which was looking at creating a Covid memorial in the borough. Some preparatory work had been done and Councillor Taylor suggested that a presentation could be made to the Forum.

Councillor McWilliams said that it would be useful to receive an update on Sierra House in Maidenhead.

Andrew Ingram said that he would like to do a presentation on the Maidenhead Downhill Races event which would be taking place in July 2021.

Linda Green asked for an item on the parking situation especially as there had been an increase in parking charges.

Councillor G Jones asked if Maidenhead Festival would be going ahead this year. Andrew Ingram confirmed that it had been rescheduled for 2022.

Councillor Singh said that there had been some issues with parking around the Methodist church in Maidenhead, with a number of parking spaces being lost. There had also been a few reported anti-social incidents around the town and suggested inviting Thames Valley Police to the next meeting to provide an update.

Linda Green commented on the number of buildings under construction in the town centre and the lack of green space. She believed that residents were concerned about the lack of green space, infrastructure, traffic and parking.

Councillor Stimson suggested that she could address the meeting in July on the joined up thinking of the borough. Regarding Councillor Singh's suggestion on the Methodist church,

Councillor Stimson suggested that it was something worth discussing with the relevant Cabinet Member and parking officer.

Councillor McWilliams advised Linda Green to have a look at the Borough Local Plan, which set out the strategic priorities of the borough. The Maidenhead Town Vision was another useful document, while new parks had been created at Thriftwood and Battlemead.

The Chairman told the Forum that he would be presenting a paper to Cabinet at the end of the month on the Maidenhead Vision along with the creation of a new town team. It was important that the town centre was for everyone.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members of the Forum noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021, starting at 6.15pm.

The meeting, which began at 6.15 pm, finished at 8.20 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....